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"Personal Recollections
of Whistler."

by Sidney Starr.

fancy glosses the real, and in childlike faith you hold to it.

Those lost fish, the fisherman's hallmark! The mysterious bond that brings together all that go down to the rivers. They never tire of telling, they never tire of listening, for all who cast, know; it is the world-wide sympathy that mellows and binds the craft, the genialest craft under the sun.

With their knees under the table they sat and listened to the time-mossed stories, interest ever new and keen in their hearts. Don Danuelo brought from his pocket a flask of rare old Scotch, and standing raised his glass.

"Gentlemen, to the lost fish! May their memory never grow old, nor their pounds less."

Before we had quite cleared the table, the Don apologetically wagged his head, and conceded there *was* skill in casting a line and dropping a fly — and, if he were younger — there was no telling —

The Judge generously hastened to admit that in some cases roe might be used and the man remain a fisherman. He courteously offered to eat his fiery words and soften his adamant rule, bluntly laid down, with an occasional extenuating exception. The Judge was didactic, but just and great-hearted as to wounding feelings.

The Señor rose from his coffee.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it has been a God-given day. I wish you a good-night."

That sweep of his bow included us all; and he was gone, and more than the man went with him; we all felt the loss.

The Judge and the Don moved to the chimney corner, and talked over reaches and pools, disputing as to shadow and sun, the superiority of this over that side

of the river, and minutely analyzed the habits of trout.

When the last dish was shelved, and the tired little woman was setting bread, I heard the tramp, tramp of the Señor's feet on the upper porch. I knew he was searching the stars and casting into deeper pools of thought than those of earth.

How cleanly, how frugally he lived, one with the stars, the trees, the birds, the restless river, an angling rod, and a book of philosophy for companions. Alone in the world, he peopled it for himself; and in closeness to nature he had crept very close to his God. It was our privilege to have been of his company.

What sordid husks our bodies are for beautiful souls! Don Danuelo to me was all tenderness and consideration. I fancy in memory of that near one, who sleeps long in the old Mexican home, his heart was softened to all women. And the Judge! His chivalry was most prized when he brought me puffs of delicate milkweed, glistening cascara-sagrada berries, and sprays of coral-beaded honeysuckle. The Señor laid at my feet remembrances of his old far-away home and honey of sweetness and wisdom from his beloved book, which shortened the days.

And I, only an ugly, withered, lone woman, who had wandered to the mountains, praying for health, of no comfort, beauty, nor sweetness to any one, received the largesse of their graciousness.

"A God-given day!" Good-night, Señor, Don Danuelo, Judge. May it be a God-given night for all three of you! May your baskets of the morrow be heaped and shining, each to his heart's desire.

And I close my eyes and sleep safe, knowing that there are yet hearts beating in the world for the old and friendless.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF WHISTLER

BY SIDNEY STARR

WHEN one speaks of Whistler now, it is with the consciousness that he is accepted as among the masters of painting. "*C'est un grand seigneur de la peinture qui s'en est allé,*" says Arsène Alexandre.

To have known Whistler and the attitude of the art world and the picture-gallery-going public from 1873 to 1892, is, strange as it may sound, to wonder how this has come about; to wonder why people speak reverently of pictures so recently thought ridiculous, and to speculate as to how many would think them so now, had they but the courage. As indeed one man has, who paid what he thought a "steep price" to get "a Whistler," and confesses he can see nothing in it, wonders what artists do see, and could sell it for three or four times the sum he gave for it, yet keeps it in his possession.

I speak of Whistler as a painter only. As an etcher, I remember, London thought him "very clever," although Sir Seymour Haden had said that of his two collections he would part with his Rembrandts rather than his Whistlers. Critics nearly all spoke of his etchings with respect, until his finest period, when they pointed out how greatly he had deteriorated. For Whistler's painting, too, by the way, "clever" was the word. Sir John Millais's dictum, given in his *Life and Letters* by his son, is: "Clever a fellow as he [Whistler] is — a man who has never learnt the grammar of his art, whose drawing is as faulty as it can be, he thinks nothing of drawing a woman all out of proportion, with impossible legs and arms proceeding from no one knows where. Any affectation of superiority in style has its effect on certain minds, and attracts a certain number of followers." And Mr. Archibald Stuart-Wortley says: "Once

he [Millais] seized me by the arm and made me go round the Grosvenor Gallery with him. He stopped longer than usual before a shadowy graceful portrait of a lady, by one of the most famous painters of our day — an arrangement in pink and gray, or rose and silver, shall I call it? At last, 'It's damned clever, it's a damned sight too clever,' and he dragged me on." This was about 1884, and the famous painter was, of course, Whistler; the portrait one of Lady Meux. But it seems Whistler somehow learned enough of the grammar of art to change the adjective; "clever" is not the word now at all.

Thinking of these things, it is interesting to go back to those years and recall what Whistler himself told me of his attitude toward the world of painting, toward the world that accepts or rejects painting, and to recall situations in which I saw him and noted what he said and did. No artist of our time, leaving us, has been the subject of so much writing, so many recollections. Never has unliterary painting caused so much literature. Not since Ruskin wrote has there been such word-painting about pictures. Before 1892 little of this appeared. In the above quotations Sir John Millais voices fairly well the whole tone of the leading journals. In France M. Duret, in England George Moore, Walter Sickert, and Joseph Pennell seem the only writers imbued with a spirit of appreciation. Whistler himself had, it is true, devoted the *Ten O'clock* and *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* to painting in words his art and his attitude. And perhaps his own writing inspired much that has followed. In this he was not only literary himself, but the cause of literature in others. And how characteristic that when Mr. Spielmann,

an art critic, spoke of his "quaintly acquired" copy of the lecture as "smart but misleading," Whistler should pause to note, "that if the lecture had not seemed misleading to him it would surely not have been worth uttering at all."

England in the seventies and eighties accepted as her picture-makers, roughly speaking, the Royal Academy for oil pictures and the "Old Society" for water-colors. The Grosvenor Gallery was more or less an annex to the Academy, with the exception of one or two men and Whistler; the former painting the serious pictures, the latter a *poseur* whose painting, as Tom Taylor wrote at the time, "belongs to the region of chaff." With Whistler the position was the same — himself and the others; but the definition was reversed: Whistler most seriously occupied with his personal vision, his sense of beauty; while the others were painting pictures with which he had little or no sympathy. To him they were "the commercial-travellers of Art, whose works are their wares and whose exchange is the Academy."

Whistler told me an incident which states the situation in two sentences. It seems that about 1874 there was talk of his portrait of Carlyle being bought for the nation. Sir George Scharf, then curator of the National Portrait Gallery, came to Mr. Graves's gallery in Pall Mall to see "the Carlyle" in this connection. Voicing precisely his public, all he said was, as he looked at it, —

"Well, and has painting come to this!"

"I told Mr. Graves," said Whistler, "that he should have said, 'No, it has n't.'"

It was some seventeen or eighteen years later that "the Carlyle" was bought for Glasgow, and it is these years that are interesting — the years of Whistler's fighting, during which I saw him continually, and when he was often in need of money. For it was not until 1892 that he sold his pictures to any great extent, or for anything like the prices

achieved by "the commercial-travellers of Art."

Whistler's jaunty carriage before the world of London is well known. He was courage personified during this time of fluctuating finances, pawning his large gold medal from Paris one day, lending £500 to the Society of British Artists the next. He often found "a long face and a short account at the bank," as he said one day. Once he spoke in the manner of an injured child of the sums So-and-So, R. A., made, while he had little or nothing. I told him he could not expect to live like a prince and paint like a prince; that the R. A.'s painted to please the public and reaped their reward.

"I don't think they do," he demurred, "I think they paint as well as they can."

"People like, as they say, 'to look into a picture.' They adore Tadema's pictures because they can 'look into' the marble," I told him.

"Well," said Whistler, "they can look into mine, they're simple enough. Yes, I suppose they do love to see what they call 'earnest work,' but they ought not to see it. My only objection to Tadema's pictures is that they are unfinished."

I spoke of one R. A. as being a better painter than another, pointing out the difference.

"Well," he said indifferently, "it's a nasty difference."

I spoke of the young men then exhibiting, some of whom are now R. A.'s or A. R. A.'s.

"They are all tarred," said he, "with the same brush; they are of the schools."

Of one, who was held to be England's most brilliant young artist, "Yes," he said thoughtfully, "he's clever, but there's something common in everything he does, so what's the use of it?"

All of which would show that Whistler had but little time for any but his own work, as indeed few great men have, much as we like to think to the contrary. He told me a story demonstrating this most clearly. His *Nocturne in Blue and Gold*, *Valparaiso*, was in the Hill Collec-

tion in Brighton. Mr. Hill had two galleries and a well-known collection, eventually sold at Christie's. Whistler went down to see Mr. Hill, and said he, —

"I was shown into the galleries, and of course took a chair and sat looking at my beautiful Nocturne; then, as there was nothing else to do, I went to sleep."

Mr. Hill came in later to find him — dreaming of it probably. And I remember when Walter Sickert, a pupil of Whistler, in an article on the Manchester "Art Treasures" Exhibition, spoke of Lord Leighton's Harvest Moon in terms of praise, a telegram came from Whistler, Chelsea, to Sickert, Hampstead, in these words, —

"The Harvest Moon rises over Hampstead and the cocks of Chelsea crow."

But with those of his circle with whom Whistler was *not* quarreling, never was a kinder, a more delightful friend. And it was in those days that he said, "Yes, we are always forgiving Walter."

Alas! for another pupil, soon in disgrace, never forgiven, who, when scenting the end of Whistler's presidency of the Royal Society of British Artists, and foreseeing a sinking ship, handed in his resignation some months ahead of time. Whistler said with a grim smile, "The early rat."

He was disposed of in the *Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, in Whistler's best manner, without mentioning his name, and a final, "You will blow out your brains, of course."

Mr. Singer, in his monograph on Whistler, describes in some detail the continuous quarrels, and the long line of friends passing down and out. But with some few at least he never quarreled, — G. H. Boughton, R. A., Albert Moore, and others I could name. That Moore and Boughton were men loved by their friends and held in high esteem by their brother artists, would seem little to the point, if Whistler found occasion for quarrel. Boughton, an Academician, whose work "was prettier than most of 'em," and Moore, whose work he said

was beautiful, were his friends to the end. Of the work of others I have heard him speak in praise on occasion, — of that of C. E. Holloway whom he helped as he did many another; of that of Charles Keene and A. B. Houghton, over whose drawings of American subjects, and illustrations to Don Quixote, he grew quite enthusiastic one evening, talking to Mrs. Whistler and myself, in the blue dining-room of his house in Chelsea.

But in Bond Street, his battle-ground, he was usually the Whistler of the "gentle answer that sometimes turneth not away wrath." Going into the Fine Art Society's Galleries with him one day, we met at the door a once popular R. A., now knighted I believe, whom I knew only by sight and so went on into the galleries, leaving the two talking. On Whistler's coming to me I said, — on mischief intent, —

"Who on earth was that to whom you spoke?"

"Really, now," he answered, "I forget, but whoever it *was*, it's some one of no importance, you know, no importance whatever."

It was in Bond Street too that Whistler went into the gallery, then full of Doré's pictures, and asked the man who solicited subscriptions for engravings of the works on view, if a certain Academician's large religious picture was not on exhibition there.

"No; that," said the man, "is much lower down."

"Impossible," said the delighted Whistler.

Yes, Whistler could be hard on his "commercial-travellers of Art." When President of the Royal Society of British Artists, he was oblivious to every interest but the quality of the work shown. When asked to hang the pictures one year in the Walker Art Gallery of Liverpool, he was occupied in making the butterfly's sting felt in very truth on the walls; on one wall at least, which to the people and to one artist, was the most important, Whistler placed Sir Luke Fildes's Doc-

tor in the centre. The picture showed a doctor watching a sick child. Around this he grouped all the pictures he could find of dying people, convalescents, and the like, with a still-life of medicine bottles which he was delighted to discover. Of course the hanging of this wall caused comment. "But," as Whistler said, when with ill-concealed glee he related the story, "I told them"—and he shook his forefinger impressively—"I told them I wished to emphasize that particular school."

"And what did you put on the opposite wall?" I asked.

"Oh, Leighton's—I really forget what it was."

"But that is different, you know," said I.

"No," he said with a somewhat bewildered look at my ignorance, "it's really the same thing."

In his Tite Street studio Whistler had shown me some canvases, one of them a *Venus* in low tones of ivory and gray-blue, bathed in the warm evening after-glow, a note of red on the ivory drapery, and spoke of painting a larger canvas of it soon. He never did. The study hung some years later between the windows of his dining-room in Cheyne Walk. Later we rode on our way to dine at the *Café Royal*. Whistler leaned forward in the hansom and looked at the *Green Park* in the dusk, sweet and fresh after the rain; at the long line of lights reflected shimmering in the wet *Piccadilly* pavement, and said,—

"Starr, I have not dined, as you know, so you need not think I say this in any but a cold and careful spirit; it is better to live on bread and cheese and paint beautiful things, than to live like *Dives* and paint pot-boilers. But a painter really should not have to worry about—'various,' you know. Poverty may induce industry, but it does not produce the fine flower of painting. The test is not poverty, it's money. Give a painter money and see what he'll do; if he does not paint, his work is well lost to the world.

If I had had—say, £3000 a year, what beautiful things I could have done!"

Then he laughed and told me that *Carlyle* said he liked Whistler's portrait of him because Whistler had given him clean linen. *Watts*, *Carlyle* said, had painted a portrait of him and given him a green collar.

I first met Whistler one night at a party in *Richmond Terrace*, *Whitehall*. He was standing near a bank of flowers, an amused quizzical look on his face; the woman to whom he was talking was laughing. The daughter of the house introduced me to him. He said he had seen a picture of mine in *Liverpool*—"a picture amongst the paint," he said, and told me always to paint things exactly as I saw them. He always did. "Young men think they should paint like this or that painter. Be quite simple, no fussy foolishness, you know; and don't try to be what they call 'strong.' When a picture 'smells of paint,'" he said slowly, "it's what they call 'strong.'"

Whistler painted things exactly as he saw them. How absurd that seemed to people when I in my youthful enthusiasm told them that he did, that he had told me he did. And indeed I am puzzled now, as I said in the beginning, to think that people covet his pictures. For what should they care about an art so elusive, painting so dependent on its exquisite quality for its appeal; a painter so absorbed in the painter's poetry, so full of the "amazing invention" that puts "form and color into such perfect harmony that exquisiteness is the result."

Perhaps it is not the beauty of the work but the personality of the painter that wrought this miracle. For it is not like that of *Burne-Jones*, who conjured with the glamour of old stories, visions of "faerie lands forlorn" (the poor construction of his sexless figures is unseen by his admirers, allured by the obvious sense of beauty); nor that of *Rossetti*, who "painted poems and wrote pictures;" nor that of *Millais*, who in his youth was in the position of Whistler, in that it was

Millais and the others. For Millais, in his earlier years an artist, said, "People had better buy my pictures now, when I am working for fame, than a few years later, when I shall be married and working for a wife and children," — giving them stories in his marvelous canvases, and later again stories or "catchy" titles with his obvious pot-boilers, of which he had forewarned his world. Whistler cared for none of this. It was the miraculous birth of the picture, the appearance of effortless completion that he desired more and more. To this end he adopted, from the first, a method — "a scientific proceeding," he said, — probably the simplest ever used by any painter and for his purpose the most unerring. He never changed it, save to paint more thinly as time went on, as did Velasquez.

The first words Whistler said to me on my first visit to his studio were, "It don't smell of paint, does it?" He was painting a portrait of Sir Henry Cole, then director of the South Kensington Museum, — a tall dark portrait of a man in a long cloak of dark blue, turned back over the right shoulder, a man with a ruddy face and a white stubby beard. Before he spoke he put a slow decisive stroke on the right cheek-bone and then stood back. The sitting was over, and that was the last stroke he put on that canvas. The portrait was never finished, for Sir Henry Cole died soon after, and I never knew Whistler to touch a canvas without the sitter.

When a student in 1874, I had seen Whistler's first exhibition in Pall Mall, and wrote to a friend, "You can paint a dress-suit black, if you like, — and Whistler can make a canvas look like the water and sky of the Thames at night, and not like paint."

Of the portrait of Miss Alexander, George Moore wrote in 1892 as "surely the loveliest in the world." Mr. Christian Brinton, understanding it so charmingly, writes in a recent article, "The greatest galleries of the world can show nothing more lovely, more appealing, or more sen-

sitive." But in 1883 at the Private View of the Grosvenor Gallery, what an absurd, "ugly" thing every one thought it, even the artists, with few exceptions. The critics had nothing but abuse for it, as witness: —

"A large etching in oil, a 'rhapsody in raw child and cobwebs,' by Mr. Whistler," from *The Artist*; and "Mr. Whistler's single contribution is a child's portrait . . . uncompromisingly vulgar," from *The Magazine of Art*.

But perhaps "this is the only tribute possible from the Mob to the Master," though the names of the journals, since dead, would seem misleading. Joseph Pennell points out in his preface to *The Works of Charles Keene*, that the English critics did not speak of Charles Keene as a great artist until he was dead, and then they misunderstood his work. W. E. Henley says that R. A. M. Stevenson created art criticism in England. That before his criticisms, culminating in the book on Velasquez, art criticism did not exist. Both Pennell and Henley seem severe, but a study of the subject inclines one to agree with them.

When the Miss Alexander hung in the Goupil Gallery in the Whistler exhibition of 1892, it had gained in beauty. Whether the original coat of varnish had been rubbed off, I do not know, but a coat of varnish had recently been put on it. The picture was more delicate in quality, the whites having gained translucence in the ten years or so of its life. Certainly just before the exhibition, Whistler had told me of the man in Berners Street, Oxford Street, "the finest picture-restorer in the world," whose broad thumb was then taking the original coat of varnish from one of his larger canvases, he did not say which. George Moore and I were looking at this portrait, hung at one end of the large room in the old galleries in Bond Street, but we were not long allowed to forget that our idea of the beautiful was not popular. A large pompous person, with a party of ladies in his wake, stopped before it and said with

a sweep of the arm, "If I could endorse these things. I would, but I can't."

Those were his very words. I said to Moore, "He has no need to say that, all he has to do is to stand there."

When the Miss Alexander was in the studio before it went to the Grosvenor, Whistler told me that Tom Taylor, art critic of *The Times*, came to see it. There were other visitors. Taylor said, "Ah, yes, um;" then remarked that the upright line in the paneling of the wall was wrong and the picture would be better without it, adding, "Of course it's a matter of taste." To which Whistler replied, "I thought that perhaps for once you were going to get away without having said anything foolish; but remember, so that you may not make the mistake again, it's not a matter of taste at all, it is a matter of knowledge. Good-by."

It was curious to note the effect of Whistler's pictures in a general exhibition, the intrusion of his art among the hitherto little-disturbed ideals of the British public. A work by Whistler made all others on that wall appear as if done by one man, of the same colors, key, and facture, whatever the subject. It was startling, and one felt the truth of his statement that "They were all tarred with the same brush." And once *The Fur-Jacket* hung in the Goupil Galleries and on the opposite wall a large *Fortuny*. One would imagine that the *Fortuny* would sparkle and the Whistler would look sombre. No, the beautiful tone of the whole canvas, the delicate flush on the face of the figure by Whistler made the *Fortuny* look "black," in spite of its emerald greens, pinks, and yellows.

Of Whistler's presidency of the Royal Society of British Artists and his endeavor to make it an "art-centre," I shall speak only of such things as are not well known, or not known at all — a difficult thing to do in this connection. He exhibited in the society some of his best work. His first contribution, I think, was the portrait of Mrs. Louis Huth. This beautiful canvas is but little known;

the first reproduction I have seen of it since his death is in *The Work of James McNeill Whistler*, by Elizabeth Luther Cary. It was painted some years before its exhibition in the Royal Society. In earlier years Whistler painted many portraits showing the face in profile. Later, one may observe he nearly always chose the full face. Walter Sickert asked him why he no longer painted profiles. "Oh, the blue Alsatian Mountains," said he.

As I was a member of the society and on the hanging-committee twice during his active career, I naturally saw the effect which Whistler's personality and the enforcing of his principles had on the "British" that afterwards "remained," as well as on the "artists" who "came out." Whistler gained from Queen Victoria permission to prefix the title "Royal," much coveted by art societies in London, and invited the present King and Queen, then the Prince and Princess of Wales, to visit the exhibition. The Prince, on coming up the staircase, asked the President what the society was, saying that he had "never heard of it." The society is the oldest in London with the exception of the Royal Academy, but the appropriate answer was with Whistler, and he said, "Sir, it dates from to-day."

The Prince laughed good-naturedly, and then learned of the society's antiquity and of the charter it alone possessed. Whistler told me that the Princess particularly liked my picture, and on my showing gratification, said with a diabolical twinkle in his eye, "But she also liked that," and pointed to one by a "British" artist artfully hidden in a corner.

There came a press-day when Whistler's picture was not there, only the frame on the wall. It was the custom of the society, instituted before Whistler's time and not discontinued by him, to provide for the press a well-spread table and such comfort as a good cellar contains, to cheer them as they appraised the pictures. Telegrams were sent imploring the placing of the President's canvas. But

the only answer that came was, "The Press have ye always with you. Feed my lambs."

A smoking-concert followed during the exhibition. At this one critic said to the master, "Your picture is not up to your mark, it is not good this time."

"You should not say it is n't good, you should say you don't like it, and then, you know, you're perfectly safe; now come and have something you do like, have some whiskey," said Whistler.

But on the adverse vote being cast which ended his leadership of and connection with the society, he said to a group of the men he was leaving, "Now I understand the feelings of all those who, since the world began, have tried to save their fellow-men."

Albert Moore's comment to Whistler on this episode was, "If I had a flying-machine, do you think I'd hitch it to an old omnibus?"

But Whistler's example in the society was the most artistic blow ever aimed at the Royal Academy. "Royal Commissions" had glanced off, attacks from outsiders had missed their aim, but Whistler's eventually resulted in the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers, and landed squarely on the closed jaw. Only once, I think, did Whistler revisit his old society's rooms. It was when a picture of Lord Leighton's had been secured and hung in a centre. The members led their visitor up to it and pointed with pride to their acquisition. Putting his monocle in his eye and surveying the canvas, "Yes," said he, "it's quite beautiful, like a diamond in the sty."

In the Tite Street studio Whistler closed the large door and used a narrow one, three steps leading up to it. Leaving this door open, he would go down the steps and stand in the passage to look at his work. Through the door, the light coming from the large window on the left, one saw the tall canvas. The portrait finished, one forgot the canvas and became conscious only of M. Duret, Sara-

sate, or Rosa Corder in the late afternoon light. I remember one afternoon he met me at the front door and led me by the arm to the foot of the steps, saying, "There he is, eh? Is n't that it, eh? All balanced by the bow, you know. See how he stands!" It was Sarasate. And when the portrait was exhibited Whistler said, "They talk about my painting Sarasate standing in a coal-cellar, and stupidities like that. I only know that he looked just as he does in my picture when I saw him play in St. James's Hall."

Once I found him looking thoughtfully at the portrait of a lady whose husband had just left the studio, having come to see it, now that it was finished.

"That," said he, indicating the portrait, "is a crime. I have been so long over it and the man has been so nice about it, that I feel ashamed of myself. He seemed to like that very much," pointing to a life-sized figure of a little Chelsea girl, standing legs apart, arms akimbo, with a white pinafore and rosy cheeks. "Do you know, I think I'll pack that in the case with the portrait and send it to him as a gift." And he did.

We walked from the studio to his house in The Vale, and on the way he told me he had given up smoking. "The ease with which I did it," said he, "is delightful to me. I just let it go, that's all;" and he waved it away with his wand in a yellow-gloved hand. Later he again made tiny cigarettes, in the intervals of work or in the evening after dinner.

There was a young American painter then in England, Aubrey Hunt, and a good painter he was. After the private view of a collection of his pictures, a party of four, one of whom was Whistler and another the art critic of a London paper, were seated around a table conversing and commenting. All at once Whistler said, —

"What are you going to say about Aubrey Hunt's pictures in your paper, Willie?"

"Oh, I shall say just what I think, you know."

"No, you won't, Willie, you'll say they're damned good, that's all."

"Oh, but I couldn't do that, you know."

"Why not, Willie? Albert Wolff saw a play, and his criticism in his paper consisted of two lines, the title of the play, and his opinion, thus:—

"*'Le Roi s'Amuse.*

"*'Il était seul.'*

"You just put,

"*'Aubrey Hunt's Pictures.*

"*'They are damned good.'*"

Upon further protests Whistler said,

"I'd do it if I were you, and hand in my resignation at the same time, and— what a perfect exit, you know!"

All London came to Prince's Hall to hear Whistler deliver his *Ten O'clock*. The following comments which I heard are illuminating:—

E. A. Abbey said he thought he had heard it all before.

Lady—— said, "Yes, he is a very clever man."

On the platform behind the curtain his old fellow student, now Sir Edward Poynter, P. R. A., shook hands with the lecturer, saying, "I congratulate you, Whistler; you said a great many things that, er— ought to be said," and rapidly vanished.

M. Duret remarked to me, "He was describing himself, he and Hokusai are the two great artists."

After this, Whistler turned to me and said, "Did you see 'em [the critics]? They were all sittin' in a row close up, on my left; did you see me shake my finger at 'em?"

The *Ten O'clock* was given at Oxford in April. I went down with Whistler and his brother, "Doctor Willie," to put up at the historic Mitre. The lecture-hall was small, with primitive benches, and the audience was small in comparison with that of London. The lecture was delivered impressively, but lacking the original emphasis and sparkle. Whistler hated to do anything twice over, and this was the third time; but it was on record.

When asked to make a drawing of one of his pictures for some publication or other, he had said, "You cannot lay your egg twice."

So on our return to the hotel there was no word of the lecture. Mr. Manners, the original sentry in Gilbert and Sullivan's opera of "*Iolanthe*," who was staying at the Mitre, was asked to come into our room, and he sang for us "*The Contemplative Sentry*," the second verse slightly altered to our ears, as thus:—

When in that house R. A.'s divide,
If they've a brain and cerebellum too,
They've got to leave that brain outside,
And vote just as their leaders tell 'em to.
But then the prospect of a lot
Of Artists all in close proximity,
A-thinking for themselves is what
No man can face with equanimity.

Next day the master firmly refused to spend time in Oxford: "In the spring landscape was loveliest in London."

On Cheyne Walk, not many doors from the house in which Rossetti secluded himself, was in the latter years of his life that of Whistler, with its old-world garden, where beyond the lawn and the mulberry-tree were the flower-beds and the summer-house; on Sunday afternoons in summer here stood the tea-table, and the master and his wife were at home. Sometimes Whistler would make a lithograph of his guests sitting about the table, not talking as he worked, dressed in a blue serge suit, the "pilot-coat" buttoned, the ends of his black ribbon tie floating over the lapels, his narrow-brimmed straw hat, with black ribbon band, a-tilt over his nose. Or if he were writing a letter to the paper, he would read it to them. With the *Gentle Art of Making Enemies* fresh in the field and Albert Moore in his audience, he read one Sunday the trial scene with dramatic significance. Often it was my good fortune to stay for dinner and spend the evening *en famille*. Many interesting things happened in the blue and white dining-room; here evolved the construction of annotations to the destruction of the annotated in the *Gentle Art*; while the lovely little gold and

green frog, Mrs. Whistler's model for decorations in a book of fairy-tales, would jump, turning a back somersault from her finger, three feet to the Nankin centrepiece. Sometimes Whistler would play the devil's tattoo on the table and look the part so well that I would say, —

"Would you do all that to them?"

Then Mrs. Whistler would say, "Oh, Jimmy, you'll be rich, I'm sure, soon; look at his eyebrows, Mr. Starr; people with eyebrows like that always get rich."

Once I was speaking of B. R. Haydon's vivid autobiography, and Whistler looked up from the copper-plate of *The Traghetto*, which he was retouching with dry-point, saying, "Yes, Haydon, it seems, went into his studio, locked the door, and before beginning to work, prayed God to enable him to paint for the glory of England. Then seizing a large brush, full of bitumen, he attacked his huge canvas, and of course — God fled."

Only once, that I remember, did Whistler speak to me of the early days in Lindsey Row. One summer night after dinner and the mild game of whist, which Whistler, Mrs. Whistler, her sister, and I used to play, the master had taken me to the door to look at the river. The night lured us down the path to the gate and then on by Don Saltero's walk and Lindsey Row, and Whistler told me of *The Balcony*, at which we had been looking in his studio before dinner, and other things he had painted there, in the room with windows facing south, — and how beautiful the things observed, how difficult to execute in that south light! Then, indicating Battersea Reach lying bathed in the mysterious bloom of a summer night, he said, "Starr, now please point out the detail which Burne-Jones said my nocturnes lack; of course you can see it, now, please."

We walked back, and "New" Battersea Bridge was before us; his "old" bridge was gone. But that was not troubling him, he had ensured its life well enough. I asked him if the southern ex-

posure of the room in which he was then working troubled him.

"Yes," he said, "it did; but Ruskin lives in the North, you know, and a southern exposure troubled him, rather, eh?"

The *Falling Rocket* was on the market in those years, and could have been bought for much less than its price in 1892. Messrs. Dowdeswell had it for some time. I spoke of its beauty, quality, and so forth, one day to Mr. Walter Dowdeswell, who said that apparently few people thought as I did, for no one seemed to wish to buy it. The *Falling Rocket* is now in the Metropolitan Museum, lent by its owner, Mr. Samuel Untermyer. When it came to America, Whistler wrote a postscript to one of his letters as follows: —

"Give us all details as to its safe arrival, and as to how my lovely little 'Rocket' is liked. You must tell them all about 'its place in history.' And let Mr. Untermyer know that he possesses the famous *Nocturne* that was the destruction of Ruskin. . . ." (With the *Butterfly* sign-manual.)

And in another: "You know that I am greatly pleased, although the picture will now be so far away. Still I certainly do not wish my works in London. Already since the exhibition in Bond Street several pictures have gone to America, and the Ruskin lot will be furious about 'The Fallen Rocket.' Of course you must write and tell me all about the picture — how it looks and how it is liked. In short, I look forward to your next with the greatest possible interest."

One more extract from a later letter gives the atmosphere of 1892: —

"Our address is as you see, Paris, — and I must say I am delighted with the place. The dreariness and dullness of London was at last too depressing for anything — and after the exhibition there was really nothing to stay for. Indeed the exhibition itself summed up the situation most beautifully. It was, as you remember, a complete triumph — crowning all my past victories. No farther

fighting necessary — I could at last come away to this land of light and joy where honors are heaped upon me, and Peace threatens to take up her abode in the garden of our pretty pavilion. However, I do not promise that I shall not, from time to time, run over to London, in order that too great a sense of security may not come upon the people!"

And now he was in Paris, and he had his triumph. Fortune came to him, and sorrow. Still his goddess remained with him "loving and fruitful." She who had "never turned aside in moments of hope deferred — of insult — and of ribald misunderstanding."

"But his face was sadder with a shadow of gravity like the twilight of his Nocturnes, intangible, but very real. In point of fact even at the moment of success life pressed hard on Whistler. He laughed it to scorn in his lordly fashion. But Life can always take revenge if only by wearing out the man who contemns it just as effectually as the man who gives in." ¹

¹ Arsène Alexandre, in *Les Arts*, October, 1903.

Was Whistler lonely? Perhaps so. Not in the sense of companionship while his wife lived, and he always had friends who loved him; but the companionship of those he seldom or never saw, the sense of being in tune with "some few of his blood," — he felt this loss. When Swinburne wrote his ill-considered article, he felt that. He was writing the answer one evening when I went in. He read it to me. "Why, O brother?" and, "Do we not speak the same language? Are we strangers, then, or, in our Father's house are there so many mansions that you lose your way, my brother, and cannot recognize your kin?"

And he meant it as it is written. So he did the reproof, "Who are you, deserting your Muse, that you should insult my Goddess with familiarity?"

It was in his voice, as was the contempt in "Poet and Peabody." He spoke of this afterwards and said he was lonely, "but one expected it." Mallarmé, too, had told him that he wrote beautiful things, but no one understood them, and he was lonely, lonely, "*comme le cerf — le cerf de Fontainebleau.*"

TO A GREEK BOOTBLACK

BY O. W. FIRKINS

IN a dusk and scant retreat,
Fronting on the noisy street,
Six lads, quick of hands and feet,
Ply a trade for song unmeet,

In the passer's careless view:
I, from Saxon loins that rose —
Churl or swain or serf — who knows? —
High-reared, propping heels and toes,
Brood in meditant repose

O'er the Greek who blacks my shoe.

Round black head that fronts my knees,
Cheeks whose tint might tempt the bees,

To a Greek Bootblack

Profile scarcely formed to please
 Myron or Praxiteles,
 Yet of dainty mould and coy;
 Eyes whose owner ne'er may guess
 What appealing tenderness,
 Dream-like in their veiled recess,
 Deep and dark their spheres express —
 Longings alien to the boy.

Reascends the ancient æon:
 Winds that o'er the broad Ægæan
 Skyward lift the joyous pæan,
 Chanted as with pipes Pandæan
 O'er the Persian's broken line;
 Trail of purple-hemmed himations,
 Foam and fragrance of libations,
 Viols, harp and flute vibrations,
 Olives, and the Chian vine.

Not for him the dream is spun;
 From his lips, unheeding one,
 In a hasting torrent run
 Accents strange to Xenophon,
 Tones Cithæron never knew:
 What to him the ages' sickle?
 What the thought that time is fickle?
 Brisk, he takes the proffered nickel;
 Eager, seeks the waiting shoe.

Meagre, in this narrowed sluice,
 Flows the rich-hued Attic juice;
 Shrunken ward of fallen Zeus,
 I thy sandal should unloose —
 Sandals — they are vanished too!
 Sad eclipse of antique splendor!
 Poor blue shirt and crossed suspender!
 Tribute gladly would I render;
 Tears, or smiles than tears more tender —
 Little Greek that blacks my shoe.

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